

# New Approach Montana

*Amid Montana's conservative 2020 election results, Trilogy delivered a breakout star, passing a pair of ballot measures to legalize marijuana for adults.*



## Big Challenges in Big Sky Country

New Approach Montana (NAMT), a campaign to legalize marijuana through a pair of ballot measures (one statutory to create a legal framework, the other constitutional to set the legal age to 21), faced a unique set of hurdles in the lead-up to the 2020 election.

Polling showed Montana voters were skeptical about legalizing marijuana. And even supportive voters were confused about needing to vote yes on not one, but two ballot measures. Furthermore, the number of competitive races in Montana — for Senate, governor, and Congress — made TV ads expensive; the campaign could only afford TV during the final two weeks of the cycle. Finally, COVID-19 gutted the ground game.

Faced with these challenges, NAMT called on Trilogy to plan and execute a digital-first advertising program to persuade voters to vote yes on CI-118 and I-190.

## Creative to Break Through

Because legalization required both CI-118 and I-190 to pass, our creative emphasized the importance of voting yes twice. For instance, one Pandora audio ad referenced famous songs that say, “It takes two.” All told, we produced five studio ads, four ads featuring Montanans speaking directly to the camera, two audio ads, native ads, and numerous sets of display ads. As always, collaboration

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Produced 9 unique video ads
- Served more than 42 million digital impressions over 6 weeks
- Both measures passed with over 56% of the vote



**Montanans Are Voting Yes on  
Measures 118 and 190. Here's Why.**

Ad by **New Approach Montana**



was key: We worked hand-in-hand with our friends at the campaign's TV and mail firms to produce direct-to-camera spots that created a cohesive look and feel across media.

Through pre-flight creative testing on Swayable, we found that some of our ads worked across targets, others worked for only some audiences, and one even created backlash across the electorate. Testing proved critical to serving the most effective ads to specific targets. You can check out a few of our ads [here](#).

## A Plan to Win

Montanans began voting in huge numbers in mid-October, when the campaign was dark on TV, so digital communication was paramount. But the same factors that made TV so expensive — small audiences and intense competition — also made Montana the most challenging market for digital buying in 2020.

Our plan surged spending from the start and maintained heavy frequency over all six weeks (with peaks as mail-in ballots dropped). We bought across eight platforms, delivering over 7 million impressions a week, averaging more than two touches a day per voter. We swiftly switched gears in response to new polling, testing results, and platform-by-platform spend, monitoring as we executed the plan.

In the end, Trilogy's digital-first advertising program paved the way for a massive victory. We beat internal polling expectations by about 7 points, with CI-118 receiving 57.8% of the vote and I-190 56.9%.



To pass a marijuana legalization ballot initiative in a conservative state like Montana, you need a strategy that builds support across the political spectrum. Trilogy played a very important role in developing and executing that strategy for our campaign in 2020. They produced digital ads that resonated with voters in clear and powerful ways, and they delivered those ads efficiently by reaching the right voters when it mattered most. I give the Trilogy team a great deal of credit for helping to seal our victory.

### **MATTHEW SCHWEICH**

Deputy Director, Marijuana Policy Project  
Campaign Director, New Approach Montana

